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GS:

Thoughts on Pakistan

You asked me to estimate where the Pakistan thing will stand in 1982.

If we pursue a strategy along the lines of those now under discussion, I think we will fail to keep a bomb capability out of Pakistan's hands. I would expect that by 1982 Pakistan can and will proclaim it has a plant to produce as much enriched uranium as it requires -- LEU for peaceful purposes, and HEU for "defensive purposes".

I think we can discourage the Paks from testing. On the other hand, the Paks can design an HEU-fueled, gun-type device with reasonable confidence that it will behave more or less as predicted, without verifying it empirically. The Indians know this, and will judge that an untested HEU bomb is about as reliable as a once-tested Pu-fueled implosion bomb -- perhaps more so. Thus, by 1982 the Indians may well have taken the decision to revive their own bomb program, although not necessarily with fanfare or testing.

In sum, and barring irrational actions on either side, 1982 should produce something like a nuclear balance in the region. The Paks and Indians will each have one or a few nuclear devices available (or nearly so) for use in extremis. We may have extracted assurances from the governments-in-being that they will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons in a conflict, but these will be shaky assurances:

-- Governments in the region tend not to be stable, and assurances granted by one may not be maintained by a successor.

-- It would be understood that either country, if its existence were threatened by the other, would probably abandon such pledges.

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-- In an irrational moment, even in the absence of provocation, a government might simply renege on its assurances.

An important factor in assessing the "safety" of such a situation will be the positions of the major powers in the region. If the Soviets and Chinese choose to play out their rivalry through their respective Indian and Pakistani clients, the problems clearly would be greater.

(PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THE INDIA ARGUMENT)

All of this assumes that we will fail to induce the Paks to accept an influx of Western arms as acceptable compensation for giving up acquiring a nuclear capability. I think we will so fail, and I believe we could do worse than fail with the policies we are now considering. Unless we can achieve some understanding with the other arms suppliers to the region, "buying out" the Pakistanis with sophisticated weaponry invites an arms race in the sub-continent, which India is in a position to win. We would violate all our precepts against introducing new, major military capabilities to geographic regions. We probably could not satisfy Pakistan's military desires. We would invite establishment of a highly unstable atmosphere in which conventional armed conflict between neighbors armed to the teeth would always be a strong possibility.

Not that a nuclear stalemate is a preferred outcome, or that our acquiescence in such a development cannot fail to spell difficulty for maintaining a serious global non-proliferation effort.

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I suspect the alternative to this assessment lies off the pages that are now being written.

India has now a fissile material production capability that is totally under national control, is adequate to support a nuclear weapons program, and has been demonstrated through a nuclear test. It will be difficult to deny the same to Pakistan (perhaps with the exception of the demonstration test).

It seems to me that any strategy review needs to consider whether it is possible to develop a context in

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which the existence of sensitive fuel cycle facilities can be something less than a fundamental threat to US security and world order. The NPT is an example, but there seems to be no chance of Pakistan or India acceding to it. A CTB would be another useful step, but its near-term achievement is problematical.

I recall that in August 1974, 90 days after the Indian test, Bhutto asked the PRC for two things: 5 Kg of plutonium, and diplomatic support for a South Asian NWFZ. He was rebuffed on both counts. Since then, the US has voiced and voted (in the UN) support for creation of such a zone. India refuses to support it, and recently Prime Minister Singh has introduced a new ambiguity into India's stated policy on developing nuclear weapons. Bhutto and his successor have pursued the one objective that was within their capability to attain on their own -- plutonium (and HEU).

The conventional wisdom is that a South Asian NWFZ is not a viable concept for now, owing largely to India's refusal to take it seriously. Perhaps this assumption needs closer examination, or perhaps there are alternatives to the NWFZ that could be made acceptable to all states in the region.

One fact seems clear, based on last Thursday's discussion: the strategies now under consideration are accorded little chance of success in containing the Pakistan threat. Other approaches, such as Newsom's, force a choice between basic US policies.

If we still have three years before a Pak test, why don't we use some of that time to see if there is a fundamentally different way to approach the problem?

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